



Ministerial to Advance **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

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Statement on Blasphemy/Apostasy Laws

As representatives of the international community, we stand together in support of the interconnected freedoms of religion and expression. We stand in firm opposition to laws that impede the freedom of individuals to choose a faith, practice a faith, change their religion, not have a religion, tell others about their beliefs and practices, and openly debate and discuss aspects of faith or belief, in a way which is inconsistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Numerous countries maintain laws criminalizing blasphemy, apostasy, or speech that might “defame” or “insult” religious sentiments. Such laws are often used as a pretext to justify vigilantism or mob violence in the name of religion, or as a false pretense to settle personal grievances. We see governments using such laws to punish individuals whose views on matters of religion or belief may differ from official narratives or the views of majority populations.

We will work collectively to encourage governments that maintain these laws to free any individuals imprisoned on such grounds, and to work toward the universal repeal of blasphemy, apostasy, and other laws that similarly impede freedoms of expression and religion or belief in a way which is inconsistent with international law. We remain committed to working with partners to help tackle problems like discrimination and violence based on religious intolerance in ways that do not interfere with fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

Co-Signatories: Armenia, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Oman, Poland, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, United States of America